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**United Nations General Assembly
Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations
Tuesday, 16 February, 2016**

**Statement to the Special Committee on
Peacekeeping Operations**

**by H.E. Ms Caitlin Wilson
Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

on behalf Canada, Australia and New Zealand (CANZ)

(Check against delivery)

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the CANZ group of countries – Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. We thank His Excellency Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson for his remarks this morning. The upcoming C34 negotiations fall at a critical moment for the future of UN peacekeeping. The Review of UN Peace Operations has highlighted the many challenges to effective mandate implementation in contemporary operating environments, and the Peacekeeping Summit has demonstrated that there is a strong collective interest amongst us all to improve UN peacekeeping.

Mr Chairman,

CANZ fully supports the UN Secretariat putting into practice those practical initiatives outlined by the Secretary-General in his Report and commends their efforts to date. CANZ looks forward to working with all C34 Members to produce a 2016 report that provides not only strategic, but also meaningful and constructive guidance to the Secretariat to enhance its efforts.

As highlighted during last month's UNSC Open Debate on the protection of civilians, the human cost for civilians caught up in conflict continues to climb. The protection of civilians (POC) is central to the credibility and effectiveness of our missions. UN missions must have preventive and proactive mission-wide POC strategies, and peacekeepers themselves must possess a clear and common understanding of their responsibilities. To this end, CANZ applauds the Kigali Principles as best practice on the protection of civilians. We are also pleased with the ongoing implementation of the DPKO-DFS internal POC Action Plan, including development of the "Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping" and its accompanying military guidelines.

Mr Chairman,

Local engagement is a critical element of effective POC as is taking into consideration the differing experiences, vulnerabilities, and contributions of women, men and children. CANZ strongly supports a comprehensive approach to protecting civilians that involves the use of both armed and unarmed strategies including expanding on the unique and important role of the civil affairs components, and other specialised civilian roles in UN peacekeeping missions.

The ultimate protection for civilians is of course the prevention and/or resolution of conflict. In the design of peace operations, political solutions must be paramount. Comprehensive approaches, that utilise all of the UN's prevention and resolution tools, are needed if political solutions and sustainable peace are to be achieved.

The meaningful participation of women is critical to sustainable peace processes and mission success. CANZ calls for enhanced recruitment, retention, and advancement strategies for female military, police and civilian personnel, and commends DFS for the initiative to develop a 'talent pipeline' of women Directors in UN Peacekeeping and Special Political Missions. CANZ is also of the view that gender advisers should play a greater role in ensuring that mission activities are made more effective through the taking of a gender sensitive approach to planning and implementation, and that all efforts should be made to fully staff and empower specialised and protection functions within UN missions.

When peacekeepers exploit the vulnerability of the people they have been sent to protect, it is a fundamental betrayal of trust. CANZ condemns in the strongest terms all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. We fully support implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse as a path to the ultimate goal of zero incidents. We have endorsed the Secretary-General's measures to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, and we will continue to support full implementation and regular monitoring of progress.

The safety and security of UN personnel in the field remains a key priority for CANZ. We must take necessary steps to ensure that our peacekeepers have the capabilities that they need to protect themselves, and fulfill their mandate. Uncertain security environments must not weaken resolve to confront complex challenges and protect civilians from violence.

The use of modern technology is central to effective protection of UN personnel and to the execution of their mandate, especially for those operating in dangerous environments. We must leverage the spectrum of technology available to us and help engender innovation to UN peacekeeping. CANZ strongly supports ongoing implementation of the report of the Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping. We must not deny our peacekeepers the technology they need to adequately counter the spoilers seeking to cause harm.

CANZ recognises that today's difficult operating environment poses significant challenges for field support. Peace operations need to be flexible and phased in their mandates, deployed quickly and sustained effectively, while also encouraging efficiencies. CANZ supports initiatives that deliver greater agility, operational effectiveness and bring a greater field focus to UN peacekeeping operations.

Likewise, CANZ supports efforts undertaken to address capability and performance requirements. This includes, improving operational readiness and adequately preparing senior mission leaders. In this regard, the Office of Peacekeeping Strategic Partnerships plays an important role and we endorse the SG's position to further strengthen the role of the office. We also welcome the establishment of the Strategic Force Generation and Capability Development Cell to enhance UN capabilities in the field, and look forward to continuing our close engagement with the cell.

Ensuring peacekeepers meet UN standards, particularly at the pre-deployment phase, is critical. CANZ supports the delivery of consistent and coherent training, and we recognise the standardisation efforts underway, particularly the development of the UN Military Units Manual and associated training.

Finally, CANZ acknowledges that the existing partnerships between the UN Security Council, troop and police contributing countries and the Secretariat can be improved. We welcome efforts to further institutionalise the UN's relationship with regional and sub-regional organisations in UN peace and security efforts, and to support and leverage the comparative advantages that these organisations have to offer.

CANZ firmly believes that the C-34 – now more than ever – can play a key role in our efforts to strengthen, improve and modernise UN peacekeeping. This year's C-34 must signal a shift in the momentum, and mark 2016 as the year of the implementation of peacekeeping reform. To this end, it is, it is incumbent on each and every member of the C34 to mutually support one another to produce a concise, useful, and meaningful report that adds value to the conduct of peace operations. It is in doing so that we demonstrate our commitment to UN peacekeeping and its role in protection the most vulnerable among us.

Thank you.